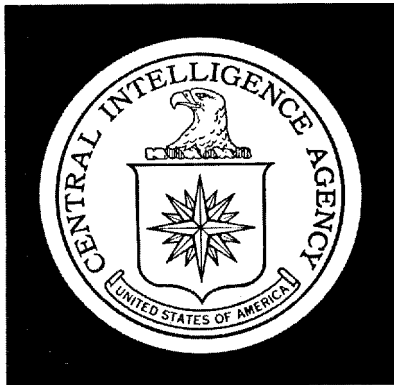


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DIRECTORATE OF
INTELLIGENCE

Intelligence Memorandum

Logistical Developments Since the Bombing Halt

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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY
Directorate of Intelligence
25 November 1968

INTELLIGENCE MEMORANDUM

Logistical Developments Since the Bombing Halt

Summary

The North Vietnamese, predictably, have been quick to capitalize on the opportunities presented by the bombing halt since 1 November. The main lines of communication in the southern Panhandle have been restored and the logistical base is being extended further south. Supply movements into the southern Panhandle have increased significantly. Traffic moving into the Panhandle of Laos has also increased but not to the extent observed in North Vietnam. As yet there is no firm evidence that the North Vietnamese are undertaking a major logistical resupply effort in Laos that would jeopardize Allied forces in the I or II Corps areas. More evidence is needed before the significance of the resupply effort north of the DMZ can be fully evaluated.

Key rail facilities in the Panhandle were repaired rapidly following the bombing halt, and through service to Vinh was possible as early as [REDACTED]

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[REDACTED] increase in the number of rail cars in the Vinh area and increased activity at transloading areas. The tramway south of Vinh also came into greater use soon after the bombing halt, and tramway trains have been observed around Bai Duc Thom, a key supply area about 25 miles north of Mu Gia.

Note: This memorandum was produced solely by CIA. It was prepared by the Office of Economic Research and was coordinated with the Office of Current Intelligence and the Director's Special Assistant for Vietnamese Affairs.

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Large North Vietnamese coastal ships of up to 2,500 tons have been observed in southern waters for the first time since the bombing began in 1965. By using such coasters, the North Vietnamese are employing the most direct and effective method of moving large amounts of materiel from Haiphong to the southern Panhandle.

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The level of observed truck activity in the Panhandle of North Vietnam has increased markedly. Large convoys of trucks have been repeatedly detected moving or parked along the principal routes heading south toward the DMZ and southern Laos. Very heavy traffic has been observed around Vinh. It is not clear how much of this activity is an actual increase in supply movements and how much reflects a resort to overt daylight operations in a bomb-free environment. Observed truck traffic along coastal roads has also increased significantly with concentrations of trucks photographed on Route 1A as far south as the DMZ. Several pieces of artillery and anti-aircraft equipment have also been observed moving south.

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In North Vietnam

Railroads

1. Through rail service to Vinh was restored shortly after the 1 November bombing halt.

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[redacted] showed small flatcars pulled by truck locomotives just north of Vinh. Of the seven trains sighted on these three days, three were heading south, three north, and one was in the Vinh railroad yard.

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[redacted] The level of supplies noted in the Vinh rail yard increased significantly and rail-to-road transshipment areas in the rail yard were being expanded.

2. The rapid restoration of through rail service to Vinh was made possible by speedy repairs to the railroad bridges at Dien Chau and Tam Da, the two main chokepoints south of the 19th Parallel that had been under heavy air attack. The original bridges and alternative crossings were unserviceable as of 29 October. Their reconstruction by 10 November reconfirms the capability of the North Vietnamese to repair bomb damage rapidly.

3. Rail activity at Thanh Hoa also increased after the bombing halt. About 320 rail cars were noted in [redacted] the rail yard, compared with an average of 155 observed [redacted] Activity at transloading areas also increased, and there was an overall increase in the numbers of POL tank cars.

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4. The tramway south of Vinh also became more active soon after the bombing halt. Several small trains of tramcars were observed around Bai Duc Thom, a key supply area about 25 miles north of Mu Gia Pass. Pilots had reported that this area

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[REDACTED]

appeared only nominally operable prior to the bombing halt. Several bridges have been reconstructed and there is evidence of reconstruction of a five-mile rail spur which heads south toward Mu Gia from Bai Duc Thom. A truck carrying rails was observed south of the present terminus of this spur, indicating that the North Vietnamese may plan to extend the spur to Mu Gia.

Highways

5. The level of truck activity observed in the Panhandle of North Vietnam since the bombing halt has increased dramatically. Now free from attack, the North Vietnamese have been moving trucks and conducting major repairs and maintenance operations during the daytime. [REDACTED]

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[REDACTED] there has been an increase in support activities, including the construction of new facilities as well as road and bridge repairs.

[REDACTED]

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[REDACTED] traffic moving south from Hanoi on Route 1A in November was the heaviest observed in more than three years.

7. Large concentrations and convoys of trucks have been repeatedly observed moving or parked along the principal routes heading south toward the DMZ and southern Laos. At Tam Da, ten miles south of the 19th Parallel, [REDACTED]

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[REDACTED] more than 200 trucks on Route 1A, concentrated on both banks of a ferry crossing. Prior to 1 November, only light traffic had been noted on this heavily bombed road segment. Very heavy traffic has been noted in Vinh and the surrounding area, suggesting that Vinh is becoming an even more important logistical center. Before the bombing halt, no more than 50 trucks were detected in the city at any given time, but since the halt more than 200 trucks have been counted within the city limits, and many more have been detected on nearby roads. [REDACTED]

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8. South of Vinh, most trucks have been moving inland toward the Laotian border along Routes 82, 15, and 137. On Route 82, several hundred trucks have been observed on each of several different days. On Route 15, between 100 and 170 trucks have been observed, and a group of about 350 troops or construction workers was detected [redacted] about ten miles from the Laotian border. On Route 137, as many as 100 trucks have been sighted [redacted]. On coastal Route 1A, truck traffic has also increased significantly, with concentrations of trucks observed along the route as far south as the DMZ.

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9. Several pieces of artillery and antiaircraft equipment moving south have been noted [redacted] 7-mm and 57-mm antiaircraft pieces pulled by trucks were detected on Route 15 moving toward Mu Gia Pass. Four 100/122-mm field guns towed by trucks were observed on 9 November on Route 1A near Dien Chau. [redacted] 122-mm howitzers pulled by three trucks were observed heading south on Route 72 northwest of Vinh.

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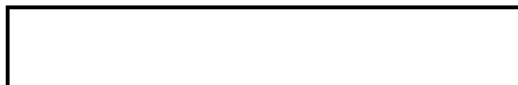
10. Trucks carrying pontoon sections and large POL tanks have also been noted [redacted]. pontoons similar to the ones observed have been recently used to repair several bridges on Route 1A. The large POL storage tanks being moved south are used at new dispersed POL sites under construction along key roads.

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Watercraft

11. Almost all of North Vietnam's small fleet of coastal merchant vessels and tankers have begun to move cargo from Haiphong directly to the Quang Khe and Dong Hoi areas since the bombing halt.

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Photography [] showed the *Ben Thuy*, North Vietnam's largest coaster with a capacity of about 2,500 tons, lightering into smaller high-speed coasters off Hon La Island, about 14 nautical miles northeast of Quang Khe. Three other North Vietnamese coasters -- the *Hoa Binh*, *Thong Nhat*, and *Nuu Nghi* -- also have been photographed off the coast of southern North Vietnam. []

[] This is the first time that large coasters have been active in southern waters since bombing began in 1965. By using merchant coasters, the North Vietnamese are employing the most direct and effective method of moving large amounts of materiel from Haiphong into the southern Panhandle region.

12. Other water transport south of the 20th Parallel has also increased. []

[] A convoy of eight SL-1-type craft was noted heading north from the Vinh area on [] and there have been numerous other sightings of this type of vessel in the Vinh area and at Quang Khe. The SL-1 can carry 200 tons -- the equivalent of 70 trucks -- at a speed of 18 knots. Transshipment areas at Vinh, on the Song Ca, at Quang Khe, and at Dong Hoi have all been active.

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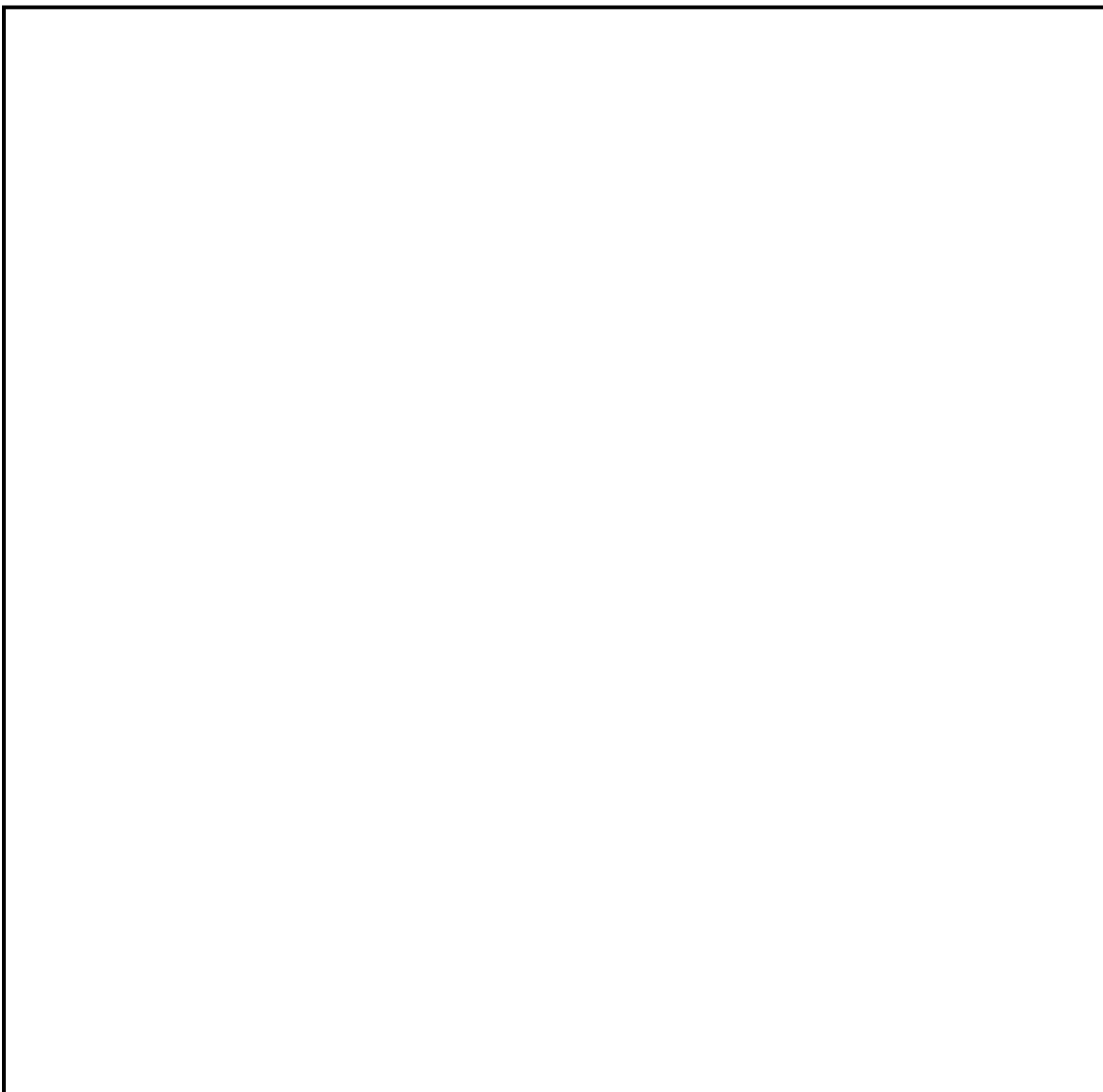
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19. A roadwatch team on Route 15, which leads to Laos via the Mu Gia Pass, reported an average of 14 trucks a day moving south toward Laos during the two days the team was in place in early November. Communist troops have apparently kept the team away from the road since that time. During the previous month, an average of 19 trucks a day moved south.



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suggested that trucks continued to move into Laos over Route 15.



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show an average of 14 trucks a day moving west from 3 to 6 November.

21. [REDACTED]

that an average of five trucks a day moved south past it from 1 to 16 November, about the same level of traffic as in August and September. [REDACTED]

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22. The average number of trucks sighted by pilots per week in southern Laos since the bombing halt through 14 November has increased about 20 percent, compared with the average for October. Sightings were particularly high during 12-14 November. Much of the increase, however, may be explained by the increase in the number of sorties, as shown in the following tabulation:

	Average Number of Trucks Sighted per Week	Percent Increase over Previous Month	Average Number of Sorties per Week	Number of Truck Sightings per Ten Sorties
<u>1967</u>				
Oct	248		584	4
Nov	1,062	328	932	11
<u>1968</u>				
Oct	261		1,080	2
1-14 Nov	316	21	2,628	1

23. The reasons for the apparent decline in truck traffic during November of this year when compared with the same month of 1967 are not clear. It may be a result of the existence of adequate stockpiles having been accumulated in the first ten months of 1968 when record volumes of supplies were moved into Laos. It could also be a reflection of the current lull in combat activity in South Vietnam. The intensified bombing of Laos could also have made logistics activity more difficult. Data on truck sightings on specific routes in the Panhandle of Laos do show, however, that through truck movement is being maintained. On several routes within the Laotian Panhandle, pilots are reporting significantly higher levels of traffic this year than during November of last year, as shown in the following tabulation:

Average Truck Sightings per Day, by Pilots

	Routes						
	<u>9</u>	<u>92</u>	<u>914</u>	<u>922</u>	<u>96</u>	<u>165</u>	<u>110</u>
Nov 1967	0.9	10.2	3.5	0.6	1.2	0.2	9.8
1-18 Nov 1968	1.8	3.5	9.1	0.8	2.9	0	1.4

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